MAKING the most of e-

BY KEVIN M. SAVETZ

As a writer and lover of all things online, I am a fervent user of electronic mail. I use it for personal correspondence, sending notes to editors, receiving electronic journals, and firing off questions and answers to mailing lists. "E-mail" is a quick, cheap, and reliable medium.

The world of electronic mail is growing at a staggering rate. In 1988, there were 1.75 million users of public e-mail systems in the United States. By 1991, the number had reached six million–then nine million by 1992. That number is expected to jump another 60% in 1993.

In my electronic exploits, I periodically see the same questions and problems arise–for example, users ask if they can post advertisements, or how to send mail from one online service to another. More daring people jump right in, occasionally to be deluged with angry mail if they should violate the de facto rules of the 'net. Below are some important do 's and don 'ts of electronic mail. They range from basic guidelines to the more stylistic.

M A I L

UNCOMMON SENSE...OR, E-MAIL ETIQUETTE

☒ Most importantly, get the point across. Any message, electronic or otherwise, is useless if it doesn't convey the right information. Think back to grammar school and remember to include the five W's—who, what, when, where, and why. Make sure each element is present in your message.

☒ Put a meaningful subject line on your message. The subject line will help remind the reader what the topic of discussion is.

☒ Type in complete sentences. Brief, incomplete sentences are nothing more than incomplete thoughts, and are often vague and confusing.

☒ Be brief. No one wants to read a novel-length message online. Correspondents who read their mail online and are paying for the privilege will resent having to read a long diatribe when only a few lines will do. In less than thirty seconds, a reader will choose to delete the message, save it for later, or continue reading. Make those thirty seconds count.

☒ Proofread your mail before you send it. I couldn't count the number of messages I've seen (and probably sent) whose meanings were totally obscured by a missing word or a errant typo. (One poor soul used electronic mail to send a resume to a potential employer. The cover letter said, "If you have any questions, please hesitate to call me.")

☒ Think before you send your message. Sending electronic mail is like driving: You shouldn't do either when intoxicated or emotionally charged. Consider the tone of your message, and think about the content. If you're angry at a corespondent, relax a bit before you decide to send a flaming missive his way.

☒ DON'T TYPE IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. It's not considered friendly. Your corespondents are likely to think you're shouting at them. Don't shout.

☒ Sign your name. Although every mail system attaches the sender's name to the message, it's nice to see a proper sign-off to a message.

☒ Don't have a long "signature" file. Some systems allow you to create a file called ".signature," which is automatically appended to all of your outgoing mail. Some people try to get cute with

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their "sigs," using funky quotes or ASCII art. However, you really don't need a signature line than four lines. I've seen 20-line signatures appended to three-line messages.

- Beware of the infamous smiley :-). I won't tell you not to use smileys, for fear of retribution by pro-smiley groups. I'll just say that some are annoyed by smileys, believing that if something is truly funny or ironic, happy faces aren't necessary to point it out.

- If you compose your e-mail off-line using a word processor, don't forget to save it in ASCII format before sending it. Many word processors include information that on-line systems won't understand. By saving your messages in ASCII format, you can be sure that when you upload it, it will be free from funky control codes.

- Don't participate in chain letters. Not only are these an enormous waste of time and computer resources, you're likely to lose mail privileges if the system administrator catches you sending them. 'Nuff said.

- In most cases, you shouldn't use e-mail to conduct business. Although it depends on what you're doing and what network you're on, courtesy and common sense must prevail. Mass mailings of unsolicited junk e-mail are always unwelcome. But if you're using electronic mail to correspond with customers or associates,

Tilt Your Head 90 Degrees

:-)	=I:-)	:-(	7:^]
The standard smiley	Abe Lincoln	The sad smiley	Ronald Reagan
;-)	=^)	:'-(	8)
The winking smiley	Dagwood Bumstead	The crying smiley	Frog
%-)	<:>==	:-o	y:-)
The confused smiley	Turkey	The shocked smiley	With bad toupee

OKAY, so maybe smileys aren't for everyone. But in appreciation of the diversity of the smiley population, we've recognized some of those little characters above. Here are some of our

you're safe. Also, most networks allow public messages announcing items for sale, like in the newspapers' classified ads, but frown on commercial advertisements.

- Many e-mail systems only support text. If you need to send sound, graphics, or binary files, you may be able to "attach" these files to a text message, or use a utility program to convert the binary information (8-bit) information into text (7-bit) data. Examples of such programs are "uuencode" and "xxencode". Find out if you system can handle mailing binary information, and if not, how to work around the limitation.

- Remember that even "private" e-mail is not necessarily secure. In the best of all worlds, no one will read your message except you and the recipients. However, unencrypted mail can be read along the way by the administrator of any computer it passes through. Sometimes this is necessary during system administration, but unscrupulous system administrators have been known to read others' mail for fun and profit.

For these reasons, don't use electronic mail to transmit information you wouldn't share with the world. If this bothers you, consider an encryption system such as Pretty Good Privacy. With this program, you can compose a message and encrypt it before sending it. Along the way to its destination, your mail is gibberish, but your recipient, armed with the code key, can decrypt your mail into readable form.

- On the same note, be aware that it is possible to forge electronic mail, making it appear to the untrained eye that it came from a user that didn't really send it. It's not common, but it's something to keep in mind. For a while, I was receiving mail from "Easter.Bunny@never.never.land"—luckily in my case, it was silly and harmless.

- Finally, keep in mind that your recipient might not check his or her e-mail regularly - or at all. Mail sent is not necessarily mail received. Some systems support a feature called "registered receipt" that will inform you when your mail has been received and read. ■

To The Left And Have A Good Laugh!

8-o	d:-)	:-ll	*<l:-)	B-)	>:)
O my god!	Baseball player	The angry smiley	Santa Claus	Batman	A little Devil
$-)	>;-)	3:]	o:-)	o-)	=====:}
Won big at Las Vegas	Devilish wink	Pet smiley	Angel	Cyclops	Snake
:-w	:-X	:-p	:<=	:3-<	:-#l
Speak with forked tongue	A big wet kiss!	Telling secrets	Walrus	Dog	Bushy moustache

favorite smileys, standard and silly, taken from *Smileys* (David Sanderson and Dale Dougherty, O'Reilly & Associates, Inc., 1993 ISBN:1/56592-041-4 1-800-998-9938.)

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Getting from here to there... or, Sending E-mail between networks

by Kevin M. Savetz

In the best of worlds, our "global village" of electronic mail would be on one main street. Alas, it is actually composed of hundreds of small networks linked using "gateways." The main street is called the Internet, but jutting off of it are dozens of side roads leading to other networks.

While it's always simplest to send mail to a recipient on the same online service as yourself—say, from your America Online account to another—sometimes you may need to send mail to someone who doesn't have an account on the system you use. (It would be difficult—and expensive—to maintain accounts on every online service.) While it's usually possible to mail from one network to another, you need to know the right route to navigate. Below are explanations of how to mail from some popular networks and online services to other ones.

Internet

Because it's the "main street," it's easiest to get mail to and from the Internet. In order to send any mail, you need to know the online service your recipient uses, and her name (or username) on that service. Here's how to send mail from the Internet to:

America Online:

Send to "user@aol.com". (e.g. "savetz@aol.com".) Mail to America Online users can't be too long— it is limited to 32Kb if the recipient is a Mac user, or 8Kb if she is an IBM user.

Applelink:

Mail to "user@applelink.apple.com".

CompuServe:

xxxxx.yyyy@compuserve.com—use the numeric CompuServe identification number, but use a period instead of a comma to separate the number sets. For example, to mail to CompuServe user 17770,101, send mail to "177770.101@compuserve.com".

DELPHI:

"User@delphi.com".

FidoNet:

"firstname.lastname@point.node.net.zone.fidonet.org". To send mail to a FidoNet user, you not only need the name, but the exact FidoNet address she uses. FidoNet addresses are broken down into zones, net, nodes, and points. To send to John Doe, who uses point 1 of node 2, which is in net 3 of zone 4 - you would send your mail to "john.doe@p1.f2.n3.z4.fidonet.org".

GEnie:

Send to "user@genie.geis.com" where "user" usually looks like "A.BEEBER42" where A is their first initial, BEEBER is their last name, and 42 is a number distinguishing them from all other A.BEEBER's. Caveat: GEnie charges users for incoming as well as outgoing mail, so you can only send mail to Genie users who have signed up for Internet mail. This is to help prevent wayward users from receiving a zillion unwanted messages and getting charged a bundle.

Other Internet users:

Send mail to "user@domain", where user is the recipient's login name, and domain is the full name and location of the computer where she receives e-mail. Examples are "savetz@rahul.net" and "an017@cleveland.freenet.edu".

MCI Mail:

Send your mail to "user@mcimail.com". "User" can be a numeric identification, or first and last names separated with an underline. (E.g. "10101@mcimail.com" or "john_doe@mcimail.com".)

America Online

AOL provides straightforward mailing to other networks. Use the same sort of addressing that you would use when mailing from the Internet.AOL provides aliases for mail to some systems, like "user@cis" for Compuserve and "user@mci" for MCImail.

CompuServe

If you are a CompuServe user, you can send and receive mail with other networks:

Internet:

Send mail to ">INTERNET: user@domain".

MCI Mail:

Send to ">MCIMAIL:123-4567" or ">MCIMAIL:John_Doe".

FidoNet

FidoNet provides limited gateway capability to other networks. Check with your local FidoNet BBS for specifics for you site. In general, to mail from FidoNet to the Internet, mail to "user@domain" (e.g. "an017@cleveland.freenet.edu".)

Prodigy

Has been promising network mail for months, but hasn't delivered it yet. So currently, Prodigy users are cut off from mail to the outside world. Perhaps by the end of the year, Prodigy users will be able to send and receive mail to and from other networks.

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